

## CLAUSEWITZ AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY WARFARE

BY

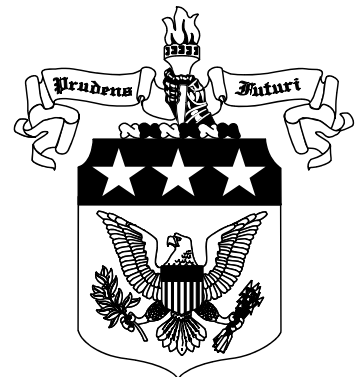
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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**CLAUSEWITZ AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY WARFARE**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The theories of Carl von Clausewitz remain relevant in the war against terrorism because globalization has blurred the Westphalian definition of a nation-state. If the United States were to examine its trinity from an adversary's point of view, it would see vulnerabilities within each leg of the trinity. In addition, the United States would see that its center of gravity rests within the will of the people. The United States needs to take action to strengthen its trinity and protect its center of gravity. Actions taken in one area will affect all areas of the trinity. Therefore, the United States needs to change its strategic message from one of advancing democracies to one that supports governments which provide for freedom, justice, human dignity, and open capitalistic markets. The United States needs to properly organize, train, and equip its military for the current environment while educating the American public and the world on its new message through a well-organized information operations campaign.



## CLAUSEWITZ AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY WARFARE

Once considered the unquestionable bastion of contemporary strategic thought, the theories of Carl von Clausewitz have recently come under attack because of the changes in warfare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While no one will debate that his theories are not thought provoking, many will argue that his writings no longer apply as a universal theory in today's climate of insurgent warfare. Many theorists and strategists, such as John Keegan, have discounted Clausewitz and his theories of war as archaic and of little value to the study of modern warfare, specifically when trying to apply them to insurgencies such as Al Qaeda.<sup>1</sup> They argue that, having focused on the Westphalia model, Clausewitz's writings do not apply to insurgencies nor do they apply to warfare waged by identities other than nation-states. While Clausewitz may not have specifically addressed insurgency warfare involving non-state actors, a close examination of the war on terror demonstrates that Carl von Clausewitz's theories remain relevant because of globalization. Additionally, as is often the case with the American way of thinking, Americans only look at a problem from their own point of view. For example, if Americans were to broaden their perspective to encompass the adversary's point of view, they could see how Clausewitz's theories of the trinity and the center of gravity remain relevant and useful in today's environment of fourth generation warfare. Moreover, when this approach is taken, it identifies potential American vulnerabilities in the current conflict with Al Qaeda.

### Warfare in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Warfare has evolved over the past 176 years since Carl von Clausewitz wrote his manuscripts, which became known as the book, *On War*. The world has seen a shift



from massive conventional forces focused on major force-on-force conflict between established states to smaller forces of non-state actors challenging traditional states with irregular and asymmetrical warfare techniques. William Lind describes this change in warfare as an evolution of warfare by generations. The first generation of warfare, which encompassed the life of Clausewitz, ran from 1648 up until the 1860's and was characterized by state-run wars. The battlefield was orderly, and militaries fought in formations of lines and columns against each other. As technology in weapon production and effectiveness improved, order on the battlefield began to break down. The idea of fighting in formations of lines and columns became obsolete. During World War I, warfare morphed into its second generation, that of attrition warfare through the massing of firepower. Order was again restored to the battlefield and the world witnessed the result, trench warfare. This generation of warfare lasted until the outbreak of World War II when it again morphed, becoming the third generation of warfare, maneuver warfare. Germany introduced this new generation of warfare with the advent of Blitzkrieg. Instead of a linear battlefield advancing into a defended position, the battlefield became non-linear where a force could maneuver around an adversary and collapse it from the rear. The most recent change in conflict has been the transition to the fourth generation of warfare. This generation of warfare is characterized by a shift from the states having a monopoly on warfighting to the rise of the non-state actor, like Al Qaeda, participating in irregular and asymmetrical warfare with traditional states.<sup>2</sup>

### Clausewitz and Globalization

Clausewitz's theories remain relevant today because globalization has blurred the definition of a nation-state. Clausewitz theorized in *On War* that war was only existent

among nation-states because nation-states were the only identities capable of conducting policy, and war was a continuation of policy by other means.<sup>3</sup> John Keegan and others argue that since the international community does not recognize Al Qaeda as a state, Clausewitzian theory cannot apply to Al Qaeda, and thus his theories must be irrelevant in the current war on terrorism. However, Clausewitz's theories are relevant today because globalization has blurred the definition of a nation-state, and non-state actors like Al Qaeda have risen in power and display all the characteristics traditionally associated with the Westphalian definition.

Clausewitz developed his theories based on the definition of a nation-state as described by the treaties of Westphalia. Scholars attribute the origin of our modern nation-state system to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia.<sup>4</sup> The combined treaties, referred to as the Peace of Westphalia, established the sovereignty of a nation-state in the absolute sense.<sup>5</sup> These treaties not only established borders for each nation-state, but also gave international recognition of the right of the nation-state to exist. After the Peace of Westphalia treaties, theorists categorized conflicts as either internal civil wars or wars between states. William Lind would assert this was the first generation of warfare.

Globalization, however, has enabled the rise of the non-state actor to levels of organization that rival that of the traditional state. Author T. L. Friedman provides an excellent definition of globalization in his book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, where he describes globalization as, "...the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies to a degree never witnessed before - in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and

cheaper than ever before.”<sup>6</sup> Farther, faster, deeper, and cheaper than ever before...people from all over the world are able to communicate via voice or text, trade commodities, recruit, share ideas and beliefs, and influence communities and nations instantly with very little overhead and without regard for internationally recognized borders. Globalization has enabled people of like minds to join in the pursuit of common goals. Whereas in the past, a movement or incident was isolated to a particular geographic region because of communication limitations, the media can now report and discuss it today in near-real time anywhere around the world.

Additionally, prior to globalization, it required the organizational capability and capacity of a nation-state to acquire, assemble, and implement the necessary items to conduct and wage war. The informational advances of the past 30 years have, however, changed all that. The revolution in technology and globalization has enabled non-state actors, like Al Qaeda, to acquire the knowledge, equipment, and instruments necessary to wage war against a nation-state. For example, this easy access to resources and information has enabled Al Qaeda to promulgate its message, recruit, equip, train, and gain valuable information that previously was unavailable; it has helped them grow in power and influence. With the benefits of the information age and globalization, the non-state actor is capable of accomplishing these tasks and competing with the traditional states in international domains. Given the power and influence non-state actors display today, Clausewitz would certainly recognize them as capable of waging war.

### The Trinity and Center of Gravity

Clausewitz theorized that war is a paradoxical trinity composed of a relationship between the government, the army, and the people. He theorized that a state must

maintain a balance between these three identities to be successful in war.<sup>7</sup> What may be missed by the casual observer is the intertwining of all three identities. Clausewitz suggests that these three variables are dependant on one another, and any action taken to affect one will affect the others.<sup>8</sup> There is much debate on the precise translation of this section of *On War* and what Clausewitz actually meant when he described his vision of the trinity. For the purposes of this paper, Christopher Bassford and Edward J. Villacres provide an adequate description of the relationship in their article published in *Parameters* in autumn 1995. In this article, they suggest that Clausewitz is describing three categories of forces: irrational forces (violent emotion), non-rational forces (forces not the product of human thought or intent), and rationality (war's subordination to reason). They further explain the relationship:

The people are paired mainly with irrational forces--the emotions of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity (or, by implication, the lack thereof--clearly, it is quite possible to fight and even win wars about which one's people don't give a damn, especially if that is the case on both sides.)

The army (which refers, of course, to military forces in general) and its commander are paired mainly with the non-rational forces of friction, chance, and probability. Fighting organizations deal with those factors under the creative guidance of the commander (and creativity depends on something more than mere rationality, including, hopefully, the divine spark of talent or genius).

The government is paired mainly with the rational force of calculation--policy is, ideally, driven by reason.<sup>9</sup>

Using this definition of the trinity, the United States can, when examining itself from the point of view of an adversary, begin to see vulnerabilities in each element of the trinity and can identify how Al Qaeda or any other adversary could target the United States and disrupt the balance. More importantly, once the United States has identified what its vulnerabilities are in the trinity, it can take actions to mitigate or eliminate them.

## Government Vulnerabilities

Since all three legs of the trinity are interrelated and any action affecting one will affect the others, exploited vulnerabilities within the government will erode the confidence of the American people and the military. When viewed from an Al Qaeda perspective, this element of the United States' trinity appears vulnerable in three areas. First, to remain in power, government must demonstrate that it can protect its citizens from terrorist attacks. Second, the current administration's policy of promoting democracy throughout the world portrays the United States as being hegemonic. Finally, the United States needs international support and coalition partners to successfully prosecute the war on terror. These three areas present seams or areas that Al Qaeda can target and exploit.

In the first instance, the United States government must demonstrate that it is capable of defending its citizens both abroad and at home. If the American people ever perceive that their government is incapable of protecting them from terrorist attacks they will begin to lose faith in the government and the American trinity will begin to collapse. Al Qaeda has made numerous attempts to promote the perception that the United States government cannot protect its service members or its people. For example, Al Qaeda used the attacks on the U.S. Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya Africa on 7 August 1998 to demonstrate that United States diplomats and citizens overseas were vulnerable to attack.<sup>10</sup> More dramatically, Al Qaeda attempted to exploit the United States government's vulnerability within the trinity by attacking the homeland on September 11, 2001. While these attacks did embarrass the government and promoted the perception that the government could not protect its people, they failed to produce the desired result, which was to erode the public's support of the government. The

American people galvanized in support of the government and the trinity strengthened.

However, this element of the trinity still remains vulnerable to attack and erosion.

America's support for the government's actions in the war on terror has declined over the past five years. For example, in March 2003 just after the United States invaded Iraq, the New York Times, in conjunction with CBS News, conducted a poll and asked Americans the following question, "Do you think removing Saddam Hussein from power is worth the potential loss of American life and the other costs of attacking Iraq, or not?" Forty-six percent of Americans surveyed answered they thought it was worth the cost.<sup>11</sup>

Five years later the New York Times and CBS News conducted another poll asking Americans, "Do you think the result of the war with Iraq was worth the loss of American life and other costs of attacking Iraq, or not?" Only 29% of Americans believed it was worth the cost.<sup>12</sup> Just by keeping the United States engaged in conflict, Al Qaeda is able to affect the will of the people and erode the people's support of the government.

The second area of vulnerability for the United States, when its trinity is viewed from the perspective of Al Qaeda, is the current United States government policy that promotes democracy throughout the world. For example, page three of the United States National Security Strategy states, "...promoting democracy is the most effective long-term measure of strengthening international stability...."<sup>13</sup> This policy is a vulnerability to the United States because it provides Al Qaeda with some degree of evidence that the United States desires to impose its form of government on the rest of the world. Al Qaeda uses that policy to incite fear in the Muslim communities, spreading the propaganda that the United States wants to impose its culture, values, and beliefs on them and convert their homelands into mini-Americas. While this is not the intent of

current United States policy, the perception that the United States intends to spread “American democracy” fuels Al Qaeda’s bravado and provides it with an avenue to attack the governmental policies of the United States.

The third area the United States government is vulnerable to is its need for international support and coalition partners in the current war on terrorism. While the United States is capable of acting alone, it is in its best interest to gain the support of the international community. For instance, in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, the United States relies on supportive countries like Kuwait and Turkey for the staging and basing of forces and for over flight rights from the Mediterranean. Without the support of these countries, the United States would have an extremely difficult time executing operations in the region. Additionally, the United States relies on its coalition to help with the burden of load of force requirements in the war on terror. The trinity is vulnerable if an adversary can weaken the support of coalition forces and the international community. Al Qaeda has targeted the United States’ coalition partners and has exploited this vulnerability. For example, Al Qaeda conducted attacks on four commuter trains in Madrid on 11 March 2004, and both Spain and Honduras withdrew forces in support of the United States’ coalition.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, effects of pressure from Al Qaeda can be seen in Afghanistan as the United States is experiencing difficulty in securing sufficient combat arms from NATO countries in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.<sup>15</sup>

#### Military Vulnerabilities

The military, too, is vulnerable when viewed through the perspective of an adversary with regard to the American trinity. Vulnerabilities identified relate to the way

the American military is trained, organized, and equipped. The United States' military is trained, organized, and equipped for large conventional battle. For fifty years, the United States military had prepared to fight a large conventional war against the Soviet Union. Once the Soviet Union fell as a threat, the United States took a "peace dividend" and reduced the size of its force. Although the United States altered its force size, it did nothing to change how the force was organized, trained, or equipped. The United States did not adjust or adapt for the increased frequency of fourth generation warfare and the continued rise in power of non-state actors. Secretary of Defense, Donald H. Rumsfeld, began reorganizing the military to become a smaller, more efficient, more lethal force: one that could cope with and defeat an irregular and asymmetrical threat consistent with fourth generation warfare.<sup>16</sup> The concept was that the United States would project its military might from within its shores to where it saw fit throughout the world.<sup>17</sup> However, this reduction of forces has created additional vulnerability for the United States. The reduction of the United States Army has reduced its size to the point that it is incompatible with sustaining a protracted struggle against a fourth generation irregular and asymmetrical adversary. This is evident in both Iraq and Afghanistan as the Army is stretched so thin it must maintain 15-month deployments and rotations on a less than desirable dwell ratio, time between deployments.<sup>18</sup> These deployment lengths and shortened dwell ratio indicate that the United States military is currently stretched very thin or close to being over-committed and thus vulnerable to exploitation by an adversary. If Al Qaeda can force the United States to commit forces to another region in conflict and at the same time force the United States to maintain its current force structure in Iraq and Afghanistan, it can exploit this vulnerability and strain the American



military to the point of failure. Failure is defined as a lack of ability to maintain an adequate number of both recruits and veteran soldiers, as well as the eroding of public support for the war on terror. This trend of downward public support for the war on terror is evident in the most recent polls. A CBS/New York Times poll conducted between 15 and 17 March 2008 indicates that the American public is growing weary of the war on terror, and support for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan is at an all-time low.<sup>19</sup>

### People's Vulnerabilities

When assessing vulnerabilities in the trinity from an adversary's point of view, the American people appear to be the most vulnerable. This element of the trinity is the most susceptible to outside influence and the easiest to manipulate. Furthermore, Americans can be influenced and manipulated by what they read in the press and see on television, both in a positive and negative manner. A well-coordinated information operation campaign can spread disinformation and confuse the American public as to what is true and what is fictitious. For example, Al Qaeda has executed an extremely effective information operation in which it promotes the perception that the United States cannot win the war on terror and that its military is losing in Iraq and Afghanistan. Al Qaeda publicizes at every opportunity the smallest tactical success it achieves anywhere in the world by using the internet, print, and television media. Since Americans have a tendency to believe what they read in the papers and see on television, it creates doubt that the United States is winning in the minds of many Americans and becomes the source of tremendous controversy and open debate. If an Al Qaeda can create doubt in the American public, then it can weaken the trinity and further advance its goal. This is a vulnerability of worth. The American public needs to

believe in what the government and military are undertaking and that the benefits will outweigh the cost. If in the public's opinion, the cost outweighs the benefits, it will apply pressure on the government to change course. Clausewitz addressed this tendency in *On War* when he theorized that the political value of the object must not outweigh the cost of obtaining it.<sup>20</sup> This relationship between cost and benefit uncovers vulnerability within the people's leg of the trinity that Al Qaeda can exploit. Furthermore, Al Qaeda has targeted American interest in an effort to persuade the United States that the benefit of fighting Al Qaeda is not worth the cost in national treasure, manpower, equipment, and dollars. For example, Al Qaeda has targeted American citizens throughout the world to weaken their support for the war on terror. In February 1998, Osama Bin Laden issued a joint declaration with the Islamic Group, Al Jihad, the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh, and the "Jamaat ul Ulema e Pakistan" under the banner of the "World Islamic Front" in which he stated that Muslims should kill Americans, including civilians anywhere in the world.<sup>21</sup> Al Qaeda began executing Osama Bin Laden's directives and in its most notorious attack, Al Qaeda flew two planes into the World Trade Center and another into the Pentagon on the morning of September 11, 2001. Continuing its campaign, Al Qaeda affiliates detonated bombs in the tourist districts of Southern Bali in October 2002 killing over 220 civilians and injuring hundreds more; of those killed, six were American citizens.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, in June 2004, Al Qaeda operatives beheaded a United States contractor in Saudi Arabia. President George W. Bush responded by saying, "They're trying to shake our will; they're trying to get us to retreat from the world. America will not retreat. America will not be intimidated by these kinds of extremist thugs...."<sup>23</sup> While these actions did not achieve their goal of

persuading the United States that the cost of fighting terrorism outweighed the benefits, they have begun to erode support as indicated in the results of the CBS/New York Times poll.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, it appears the longer the United States has forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, the less likely it is for the people of the United States to support the effort. Al Qaeda, it appears, is cognizant of this vulnerability and is attempting to exploit it in its war against the United States. Being the most fragile and susceptible element of the trinity to outside influence, the people's will becomes a very important element to protect; it is as Clausewitz would refer to as the "center of gravity" for the United States.

### Center of Gravity

Clausewitz theorized that every nation or state has one characteristic that is the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. He stated that this source of power is the nation or state's center of gravity.<sup>25</sup> He theorized that a belligerent should attempt to trace an enemy's strength back to the fewest possible sources, but ideally, to a single source of power.<sup>26</sup> Once identified, the belligerent should focus all elements of power against that source.

While it might be difficult for the United States to determine Al Qaeda's center of gravity, Al Qaeda has certainly determined the United States' center of gravity. Al Qaeda has correctly assessed the United States' center of gravity as the will of the people to continue in a protracted and unpopular war. This is not a new phenomenon for the United States. Examining past conflicts provides three examples of how targeting the will of the people has brought about a failure of the United States to reach national objectives. First, the Vietnam conflict provides an excellent example of how the will of the American people changed the course of a conflict and led to the failure of the United

States to achieve its policy goals. During the height of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, the United States was determined to halt the spread of communism. The Republic of South Vietnam became a country of vital interest in the goal to halt the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. Ultimately, the United States entered a conflict in Vietnam in an effort to achieve its policy goals of halting communism. However, over time, the war became very unpopular with the American public. Through public demonstrations, protests and anti-war movements, the American people forced the United States government to withdrawal forces from Vietnam.

The bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon provides a second example. The United States deployed Marine forces into Lebanon as part of a multinational peacekeeping force in order to provide security and allow Lebanese Armed Forces time to equip, train, and rebuild into a viable military force.<sup>27</sup> On 23 October 1983, the Islamic Struggle Organization drove a truck loaded with explosives into the barracks the Marines occupied. The result of that bombing was 220 Marines, 18 Navy personnel, and three soldiers killed and scores of others wounded. The United States government could not convince the public, the American people, that there was a clear policy objective as to why it had interjected American forces into this region. The government could not convince the cost of American lives was worth the benefit of a strong Lebanese Armed Forces. Due to pressure from the American people, President Ronald Reagan ordered the removal of American troops from Lebanon and an abandonment of the peacekeeping mission.<sup>28</sup>

A third example of how the American public influenced the government is America's experience in Somalia in October 1993. What started as a noble

humanitarian mission to relieve the suffering of the Somali people escalated into a turf battle between the forces of United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM-II) and the warlords of Mogadishu.<sup>29</sup> The United States deployed Task Force Ranger, a task force comprised of over 400 elite soldiers to include Delta Force, to capture the most notorious warlord, Mohamed Farrah Aidid, in an attempt to restore both order and a functioning government to the war-torn country.<sup>30</sup> Task Force set out on a mission to capture Aidid on the afternoon of 3 October 1993. The mission went badly and the United States soon began receiving casualties. Task Force Ranger suffered 18 soldiers killed and another eighty-four wounded. The American public saw images and footage of American soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. Shortly thereafter, the American public demanded that the United States government withdraw its American forces and abandon its mission of humanitarian relief and nation building. On 7 October 1993, President Clinton responded by withdrawing American forces, and the United States' participation in UNOSOM-II ended.<sup>31</sup> These examples demonstrate the power of the people to influence the United States government and bring about change on an international level. They illustrate the relevance of Clausewitz's theory concerning a center of gravity and the importance of maintaining a strong and balanced trinity. Furthermore, they illustrate how the targeting of the hub of all power - the will of the American people - an enemy can effect a change in the United States' pursuit of national interest and goals.

Some might argue that the United States has faced prolonged conflicts and not succumbed; that Americans do have the will to sustain a bloody and costly conflict. For example, World War II was an extremely harsh and protracted war to which the United

States remained committed, as did the American people to the national goals of the government. World War II demonstrated the effectiveness of the government to portray the conflict as a fight for national survival. The government spent an enormous amount of effort in the areas of public affairs and information operations. For example, Department of War films played in the movie theaters before every film, posters and billboards promoted the war effort, and Hollywood produced films portraying Axis countries as evil.<sup>32</sup> World War II illustrated the power of a strong trinity and the benefits of protecting the United States' center of gravity. The Axis powers were unsuccessful in eroding the support of the American people.

Having identified American vulnerabilities by scrutinizing the United States' trinity from an adversary's point of view, this paper will now recommend actions and measures to mitigate or, if possible, eliminate those vulnerabilities.

### Recommendations

The United States must take actions to strengthen the American trinity and reduce the vulnerability of its center of gravity, the will of the people. More specifically, the United States must mitigate or, when possible, eliminate identified vulnerabilities within the government, the military, and the people so as to strengthen the confidence and commitment of the American people.

#### Government

Three areas of vulnerability have been identified when examining the United States government leg of the trinity from an adversary's point of view: 1) the perception that the government cannot protect its people; 2) the policy of spreading democracy throughout the world; and 3) the need of the United States to have international support.

The United States needs to develop and implement a public affairs campaign to inform and portray the war on terror as a fight for national survival. Taking lessons learned from World War II, the United States can unite the people and the government in committed action against Al Qaeda. This campaign would focus on raising the situational awareness of the average American and eliminate the bipartisan political bickering that has weakened American resolve. In addition to engaging in a public affairs campaign, the United States must change its strategic message. The United States' national security strategy is based on two pillars as outlined by President Bush. "The first pillar is promoting freedom, justice, and human dignity. The second pillar is confronting the challenges of our time by leading a growing community of democracies."<sup>33</sup> The first pillar the President describes is noble and a good message: all people want freedom, justice, and human dignity. However, the second pillar of the United States' national security strategy is flawed. It promotes the wrong strategic message to the world. The message of spreading democracy threatens many of the countries we are trying to help. The United States makes the mistake of viewing the world from the American point of view and not that of its potential enemies or competitors. America believes that everyone in the world wants to be like the United States. America believes it needs to spread democracy to all corners of the world in order to ensure its continued success. Germane to this strategy is the belief that the United States can only survive in a democratic world that mirrors it in political views and form of government. The problem with this message is the condescending tone it presents to the rest of the world. Implied, and more importantly perceived, is the idea that the United States wants to set up mini-Americas throughout the world for its own

benefit - a very hegemonic, threatening, and undesirable perception. This perception, which is reality to those who believe it, promotes fear in the people of the world who America is trying to help. Radical Islamic groups use this fear to motivate and recruit individuals. They use this perception to justify their call for a jihad to defend Islam from an assault from the United States. Al Qaeda purports that if America is successful in establishing democracy in the Islamic world, the people will become corrupt sinners, not worthy of Allah. This fear empowers the people of Islamic culture to resist change toward democracy and join insurgencies like Al Qaeda to defend their culture.

The United States needs to delete the rhetoric of establishing and promoting democracy throughout the world. It needs to replace it with statements that emphasize the United States' support of any form of government that represents the people, provides for freedom, justice, and human dignity, and one that is friendly to open market capitalism, but not territorially aggressive. By incorporating this small adjustment to the stated national strategy, the United States will have a much more effective message, one that is less threatening to nations and non-state actors. The United States needs to admit that, while its intent is noble, the wording of its strategy is in error. The current message is not in keeping with the true desires of the global community nor is it in the best interest of the United States. The new campaign plan needs to include an address from the President. It needs to include coverage on the major television news networks, print media, and internet blog sites. All elements of government need to embrace this change of strategy and treat it as a great epiphany. In addition, the United States needs to continue the current administration attempts to keep the war on terrorism from becoming a war about religion. This is a very important tenet and one that the United



States must strive to maintain and promote if it is to have any success in winning this long war. The United States needs to make the Muslim world believe it wants to make the world a better place for all people, regardless of religious beliefs or form of government. Muslims need to believe the last thing the United States wants to do is make the Middle East and the rest of the world mini-Americas. Changing the United States' strategic message will remove Al Qaeda's claim that the United State is out to conquer the Islamic people and will help to de-legitimize Al Qaeda's call for jihad against the United States. Achieving this goal would help mitigate or eliminate one of the radical Islamic recruiting tools - the only way to defend the Muslim way of life is to fight the Christians and sacrifice oneself on behalf of Allah. In addition to implementing a public affairs campaign and changing the strategic message, the United States must ensure it maintains both strong international relations and coalition partners. A change of stated strategy would resonate well with the United States' European allies while helping to bolster continued support of coalition efforts in the reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the prosecution of the global war on terror. Furthermore, this revised strategy would send a benign message to Iran, Korea, Russia, and China, a message that the United States denounces any intentions or attempts to convert the world to mini-Americas. Provided the United States accomplishes these tasks, the government portion of the American trinity will remain strong.

## Military

As identified previously, the vulnerabilities of the military concern the way it is organized, equipped, and trained. The military, especially the Army, needs to grow in overall end strength to cope with the irregular, asymmetrical warfare it is currently facing

in today's environment while improving its ability to respond to multiple contingencies throughout the world. In conjunction with growing the force, the United States needs to procure additional strategic lift assets to deliver a larger force. Growing the force will eliminate the vulnerability of over-extending the military and provide needed relief from multiple long deployments with little dwell time. Moreover, the United States needs to continue transforming the military to increase its irregular and asymmetrical operational capabilities. As the world moves into the fourth generation of warfare, the United States' requirement to maintain a large conventional force, while not eliminated, is arguably reduced as non-state actors rise in power on the international scene. While the United States must still maintain a conventional capability, it should do so with modernized equipment that improves and maximizes its combat effectiveness. Incorporating the recommendations for the military will strengthen the American trinity and increase the confidence the American people have in the United States.

## People

As discussed throughout this paper, the American people are the most critical element of the American trinity and the center of gravity for the United States. The single most vital factor in strengthening this segment of the trinity is educating the American people. The people of the United States need to understand the essential role they play in balancing the trinity. That without the support and confidence of the American people in the government and the military, America will fail in any conflict. Furthermore, the United States needs to educate the American people on Clausewitz's theory on center of gravity and the importance of defending a center of gravity. The American people need to understand, collectively, they are the center of gravity for the

United States. Americans need to comprehend that if Al Qaeda can, like enemies have in the past, sway the American people into not supporting the government's efforts to combat terrorism, the trinity will collapse, and the United States will fail and lose the war on terror. The United States needs to portray to the American people that the war on terror is a war for national survival. The current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are just the first phase in a series of conflicts in this long war. In addition to the Middle East, Al Qaeda continues to pose a serious threat in other regions around the world.<sup>34</sup> The United States must tap into the resolve demonstrated during World War II and convince the American people that they cannot fail. To that end, the United States needs to develop commercials, publish articles in the press, and post comments on internet blog sites in an attempt to unite and educate the American people of their crucial role in the war on terror.

### Conclusion

Close examination of the war on terror demonstrates that the theories of Carl von Clausewitz remain relevant in today's climate of irregular and asymmetrical warfare. His theories of the trinity and center of gravity provide an exceptional vehicle to examine American vulnerabilities. When the United States scrutinizes its trinity from the point of view of its adversaries, it can identify the weaknesses in the government, military, and the American people. Additionally, when approached from this point of view, it becomes clear that the American people are the center of gravity for the United States. Having identified the vulnerabilities, it is now up to the United States to take the actions required to strengthen its trinity and win the long war on terror.

## Endnotes

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